



POLICY:	MANAGING ATTENDANCE POLICY
FIRST DRAFT:	ET 2016#02 (18 February 2016)
ADOPTED:	BR 2016#01 (16 March 2016)
AMENDMENTS:	
REVIEW:	April 2021

1.0 Policy Statement

All policies, guidelines and protocols of Mary Immaculate College, will reflect the Colleges commitment to the promotion of equality and will be fully compliant with the provisions of prevailing equality legislation.

1.1 Mary Immaculate College places great emphasis on the regular attendance of all employees at work. Employees are appointed to their positions on the understanding that they will maintain a level of attendance which will enable them to carry out their duties to a satisfactory standard. The College will take appropriate measures to manage employee attendance to ensure continuity of services.

1.2 The College recognises that most employees avail of sick leave when they are genuinely ill. The College does not expect people to work when they are unfit, and will actively discourage this practice, where it occurs. The College will treat the management of sickness absence in as sympathetic a manner as possible, however the focus of this policy is on the capability of employees to carry out their duties regularly and efficiently and not on the validity of illness

1.3 Management discretion will be exercised at all times in the application of managing attendance procedures and the particular circumstances of each individual case will be taken into account. The provisions of prevailing equality legislation will be given due consideration at all times.

1.4 All policies, guidelines and protocols of Mary Immaculate College, will reflect the Colleges commitment to the promotion of equality and will be fully compliant with the provisions of prevailing equality legislation

2.0 Aims of Document

2.1 The aim of this policy is to assist in the management of sick leave by establishing rules and guidelines for reporting, certifying and monitoring sick leave and managing problematic attendance.

2.2 Information on sick pay schemes is detailed separately. This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant sick pay scheme. All sick pay is granted in line with the sick pay scheme and this policy.

3.0 Scope of Policy

3.1 This policy applies to all employees of Mary Immaculate College.

4.0 Legislation/Other Related Policies

4.1 Governing legislation, regulations and codes of practice in relation to this document include:

- Unfair Dismissals Acts, 1977-2007
- Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997
- Parental Leave Acts, 1998 & 2006
- Equality Acts, 1998 to 2007
- Public Service Management (Sick Leave) Regulations 2014, S.I. No. 124 of 2014 as amended by Public Service Management (Sick Leave) Amendment Regulations 2015 SI 384
- DES Circular - Revised Sick Leave Arrangements for all Staff of Universities and other Third Level Colleges under the remit of the HEA

5.0 Responsibilities

5.1 Employees have a responsibility to:

Attend work regularly and to render efficient service.

Minimise absences resulting from accidents and ill health at work by cooperating fully with all safety measures, including training, introduced by the College

Comply with the provisions of this policy and in particular to provide adequate notice of sick leave, to maintain contact with Heads of Department/line managers during periods of sick leave, to provide medical certificates in a timely fashion and in accordance with policy and to provide a return to work certificate for all periods of certified sick leave

Attend a nominated Medical Practitioner if requested by the College.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in suspension from the sick pay scheme and/or disciplinary action being taken.

5.2 Heads of Department/line managers have a responsibility to:

Promote a positive attendance culture by communicating the importance of regular attendance, fostering teamwork and promoting and fostering the dignity at work of all employees.

Ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent or minimise occupational causes of ill health.

Ensure the provisions of this policy are complied with and in particular to ensure medical certificates and self certificates, are received on time, comply with policy requirements and are forwarded to the HR Office in a timely fashion.

Conduct return to work interviews, counsel employees who have poor attendance and where necessary, invoke the disciplinary procedure in consultation with the Director of Human Resources.

5.3 It is the responsibility of the HR Office to:

Provide advice and support to managers and supervisors in the management and monitoring of sickness absence.

Maintain and monitor absence records and to circulate absence data to managers

Provide training to line managers on management of absence and application of this policy.

Liaise with Occupational Health practitioners on employee referrals for absence review.

6.0 Granting of Sick Leave

6.1 Sick leave may be granted to an employee who is unable to perform his/her duties because of illness, injury or when absent for the purpose of obtaining health-related services (e.g. Doctor/Dentist) provided such appointments could not have been arranged outside of regular working hours or working days.

6.2 The granting of sick leave to an employee who is ill is intended to provide an adequate opportunity for that employee to recover from the illness and its effects so that s/he may make an early return to duty without a likelihood of a relapse into illness. Therefore, it would be contrary to the express purpose of this scheme to engage in any activity, (e.g. travel abroad, gainful employment or self-employment), which in the opinion of an Occupational Health Physician (OHP) could be regarded as impeding that employee's progress to recovery.

6.3 The approval of the employer must be sought prior to an employee travelling abroad while on sick leave. The employer must in turn seek the advice of an OHP before deciding on the matter.

7.0 Notification of Absence from Work due to Illness

7.1 Absence from work as a result of illness must be notified by the staff member to their Head of Department/line manager or authorised deputy on the first day of absence before normal commencement of duty if possible but not later than one hour after normal commencement of duty. The anticipated duration of absences, if known, should be notified to the Head of Department/line manager. Messages must not be left on voicemail.

7.2 If an employee becomes ill while on duty they must inform their immediate supervisor if it is their intention to go off duty. If an employee reports ill while on

duty, all hours availed of as sick leave will be recorded as such. Employees who do not qualify for sick pay will be paid for the number of hours actually worked.

7.3 Failure to provide adequate notice of absence as a result of illness can result in considerable disruption to service provision and consequently repeated failure to provide such notice may result in the employee being subject to disciplinary action.

7.4 Employees are required to maintain contact with their Head of Department/line manager during periods of sick leave. In cases where the employee does not maintain regular contact, the Head of Department/line manager may initiate contact with the individual employee in relation to their absence.

8.0 Self Certified Sick Leave

8.1 Where an employee is absent from work due to illness but does not attend a registered medical practitioner, such an absence will be classified as self certified sick leave. Self certified sick leave may not exceed two consecutive days on any occasion. Where two such periods of sick leave are interspersed by a period of rostered time off, a medical certificate will be required to cover the full period.

8.2 Paid sick leave for one or two day absences may be granted where an employee certifies that they were unfit for work due to illness. Such absences will not exceed 7 days in a rolling 24 month period. Staff claiming payment for periods of uncertified sick leave must complete and submit to their immediate supervisor an "Application for Paid Sick Leave – Self Certification of Sickness" (Appendix 1) on their return to duty. Staff who do not submit this form may have payment for sick leave delayed or withheld or may be subject to disciplinary action.

8.3 Where an employee has taken 5 or more days self certified sick leave in a rolling 24 month period the HR Office will inform them of the number of days taken.

8.4 Where an employee takes more than 7 days self certified sick leave in a rolling 24 month period they will be informed in writing by the HR Office that any such period is an unpaid absence from duty and a recoupment from salary will be made. Unpaid absences do not count as pensionable service.

8.5 Access to paid self certified sick leave is a privilege which may be withdrawn by the Head of Department/line manager in certain circumstances such as where frequent absences are being taken or the maximum of 7 days is regularly approached or taken.

9.0 Medically Certified Sick Leave

9.1 A medical certificate must be furnished to a supervisor on the third day of continuous absence owing to illness. Where the illness extends beyond the period of the first certificate further certificates must be furnished at weekly intervals from a

Medical Practitioner. Certification for periods of up to one month may be permitted at the discretion of the College. Where two periods of sick leave are interspersed by rostered time off, such as a weekend, the full period will be counted as sick leave and will require medical certification.

9.2 The medical certificate should state the likely duration of the illness, must be signed by the doctor, must include the doctors medical council registration number and must be on headed paper or bear an official stamp from the doctors practice. It is not obligatory to state the nature of the illness however it may be advisable to do so. If required information is not provided the College will not accept the certificate and this may result in a delay in payment. It is the individual employee's responsibility to ensure that valid medical certificates are submitted.

10.0 Resumption of Duty

10.1 Employees must communicate their intention to resume duty to their line manager at the earliest possible time. Where the employee has been on certified sick leave, the final certificate should state that the employee is fit to return to work.

10.2 Return to work interviews will be carried out after each period of sickness absence. These interviews will take the form of a meeting between the employee and the Head of Department/line manager to discuss the employee's absence. The purpose of the meeting will be to afford the employee an opportunity to make the Head of Department/line manager aware of the reasons for absence or of any implications of the absence on the employees work or ability to work, or of any work related issues which may be contributing to sick leave. The Head of Department/line manager will have an opportunity to discuss any issues raised by the employee and will also discuss the employee's absence rate to date. Return to work interviews must be recorded on the relevant form (appendix 2) by the Head of Department/line manager and forwarded to the HR Office.

11.0 Records

11.1 Sickness absence records will be maintained by the HR Office and will be monitored on a regular basis. Absence statistics will be circulated to all Heads of Department/line managers on a periodic basis.

12.0 Absence Management Procedure

12.1 The absence management procedure will be initiated where individual employee's sick leave absence exceeds 28 calendar days (pro rata for part time staff) or a Bradford factor of 100 in the previous 12 months. The Bradford factor is calculated as the number of episodes of sick leave x the number of episodes of sick leave x the number of working days sick leave absence.

12.2 The first stage of the absence management procedure is a referral to an Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) or OHP for sickness absence review. Staff who present a medical or self certificate indicating stress or similar or back or muscular pain as the reason for absence will be referred to OH for review regardless of the duration of absence. Employees are expected to cooperate fully with referrals to OH and to attend appointments made for them. Employees who do not cooperate with such referrals may be refused sick pay and/or be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

12.3 The OHN or OHP may recommend work restrictions, adjustments or redeployments on a short or long term basis and these will be accommodated where possible subject to overall service needs. The OHN or OHP may also recommend external counselling for staff (EAP), the cost of which is borne by the College.

12.4 Employees are expected to engage constructively with OH and to follow advice given, with a view to managing and reducing sick leave absence. Employees who do not engage constructively with OH and/or do not follow advice given may be refused sick pay and/or be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

12.5 If, after review by OH, there is not a satisfactory improvement in attendance the employee will be invited to a meeting with the Head of Department/line manager and a representative from the HR Office. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the employee's absence record, to review measures that have been taken to date, to afford the employee the opportunity to raise any issues with regard to their sick leave absence and to inform the employee that if there is not a satisfactory improvement in attendance within a specified time frame the disciplinary procedure may be invoked which could eventually result in the employee's employment being terminated on the grounds of capability. In the case of employees on long term sick leave this meeting will only take place if appropriate in the circumstances.

12.6 The Human Resources Office will continue to monitor the employee's attendance and will correspond with the employee as necessary. If there is no subsequent improvement in attendance, the disciplinary procedure will be invoked. Warnings will be issued in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and if progressive warnings do not result in a satisfactory improvement in attendance the employment may be terminated.

12.7 In the case of employees on long term sick leave the option to terminate the employment will only be considered where the duration of the sick leave is such that sick pay entitlements have been exhausted, there is no reasonable prospect of an early return to work and the employee's continuing absence poses actual or potential problems for the College. In all such cases ill health retirement will be considered as a first option.

13.0 Sick Pay

13.1 Employees who have a minimum 3 months continuous employment with the College may be granted sick pay subject to the terms of the Public Service Sick Leave

Scheme. Sick pay is discretionary, is contingent on full cooperation with attendance management measures and may be withheld by the President where circumstances warrant same.

13.2 The Public Service Sick Leave Scheme provides for:

1. *Ordinary Sick Pay*: A maximum of 3 months on full pay in a one year period, followed by a maximum of 3 months on half pay subject to a maximum of 6 months paid sick leave in a rolling 4 year period.
2. *Critical Illness Sick Pay*: Access to 6 months on full pay, followed by a maximum of 6 months on half pay subject to a maximum of 1 year's paid sick leave in a rolling 4 year period.
3. *Temporary Rehabilitation Pay (TRR)*: Following periods of sick leave there is provision for Temporary Rehabilitation Pay for individuals who need a longer period of time to address their health needs. TRR will not exceed 18 months (548 days) in the case of ordinary illness. In the case of an employee who has been granted extended sick pay under the critical illness provisions, he/she may have access to 12 months (365 days) TRR followed by a further period of TRR not exceeding 24 months (730 days). This further period of TRR is subject to regular reviews by an OHP.

13.3 If an employee has an ordinary illness within a 12 month period of the start date of the granting of a critical illness, the critical illness provisions will apply.

13.4 Where an overpayment of salary arises, for example, as a result of the late recording of sick leave absences, such overpayment will be recouped from the employee's future salary payment.

13.5 Employees who are on class A rate of PRSI and are in receipt of sick pay from the College will be paid the difference between their basic pay and the relevant rate of Social Welfare illness benefit. It is a matter for individuals to comply with the requirements laid down by the Department of Social Protection as a condition of claiming benefit.

14. Maternity Related Illness Provisions

14.1 If a pregnant employee is medically unfit for work due to a pregnancy-related illness and has exhausted sick leave at half pay she will continue to receive sick leave at half pay for the duration of her pregnancy-related illness, prior to going on maternity leave. This is regardless of whether she has reached the maximum limit for half pay due to prior sick leave.

14.2 If an employee is unfit for work following maternity leave, her access to sick leave at half pay will be extended by the period of absence on sick leave at half pay due to pregnancy-related illness, which occurred before she went on maternity leave.

15.0 Sick Leave and Other Leave

15.1 A rest day or rostered day off falling within a period of sick leave will be recorded as a sick day. Under no circumstances will additional time off in lieu of the rest day be granted.

15.2 If a public holiday occurs during a period of medically certified sick leave, an employee who normally works Monday to Friday (and takes public holidays as they fall) will be entitled to a paid day off in lieu of the public holiday following their return to work. An employee is not entitled to a public holiday if absent from work immediately before the holiday for one of the following reasons:

- Absence in excess of 52 consecutive weeks by reason of an occupational injury.
- Absence in excess of 26 consecutive weeks by reason of an illness or injury (not referred to above).
- Absence in excess of consecutive 13 weeks caused by a reason not referred to above but being an absence authorised by the employer, including lay off.
- Absence by reason of a strike.

15.3 Statutory annual leave is accrued for periods of sick leave. Statutory annual leave accrued during sick leave may be carried over to a new leave year but must be taken within 15 months of the end of the leave year in which it is accrued or it will be forfeited.

15.4 An employee on sick leave cannot commence a period of annual leave without first returning to work or providing a medical certificate confirming fitness to return to work. A period of sickness during annual leave, which is covered by a medical certificate, is not counted as annual leave.

15.5 Where an employee is ill on a day on which they are scheduled to take parental leave, that day will be recorded as parental leave unless the employee requests in writing that the day is instead recorded as sick leave.

16.0 Appendices

16.1 Application for Paid Sick Leave – Self Certification of Sickness

16.2 Return to work discussion template

APPLICATION FOR PAID SICK LEAVE
SELF-CERTIFICATION OF SICKNESS

A maximum of 7 days self certified sick leave may be taken in a rolling 24 month period.

Where a staff member exceeds seven days self-certified sick leave in a rolling 24 month period, s/he is required to provide a medical certificate for all future absences otherwise the day/s of sickness absence will be unpaid

This form is to be completed immediately on return to work and given to your Head of Department/line manager for approval and for onward transmission to the Human Resources Office.

Employee Name: _____ Employee No: _____

Job Title: _____

Department: _____

Outline the nature of the illness that warranted you self-certifying your inability to attend work.

Date(s) of Self-certification of illness: _____ Absence in Hours: _____

I reported that I was taking a day's self certified sick leave to _____(Name)

At _____ (time) on _____ (date)

DECLARATION

I confirm that I have taken self certified sick leave on the above mentioned date(s) due to illness I declare that the information given above is true and complete and I both understand and accept that if it is not the case, whether knowingly on my part or otherwise, then, following due investigation by the College, I may be denied such leave and/or be liable to appropriate disciplinary action.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Employee

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Head of Department/Line Manager

Return to Work Discussion Template:

- The return to work interview is an informal conversation.
- The validity of the sick leave should not be questioned/disputed. If there is a concern about the validity of sick leave advice should be sought from the HR Office.
- Discussions about medical/clinical matters should be avoided.
- Brief details of this discussion should be recorded & the staff member should know this.

Staff Member Name	
Department	
Absence date/period	
RTW discussion date	
Welcome the employee back	
Has the employee submitted medical/self certificates for the full period of sick leave	
Is the employee fully fit for work	
Does the employee anticipate any further sick leave going forward relating to this episode	
Is there anything the College needs to know/do to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence	
Discuss the employees sick leave record in the past 12 months and possible referral to OH and/or meeting with HR	
Confirm ongoing monitoring of attendance	
Update of changes in department while employee was absent	
Own recommendation for referral to OH (if necessary)	
Comments	

Signed: _____
Employee

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Head of Department/Line Manager

Date: _____